



Subject: *Elmsdale Village Core Concept Design and Report*
To: Corporate and Residential Services Committee
Date Prepared: April 11, 2022
Related Motions:
Prepared by: Graham Scott, Manager Economic and Business Development
Approved by: Adam Clarkson, Director Corporate Services

Summary

In communities across Nova Scotia there is a lack of an identifiable main street or downtown core. This creates challenges for businesses looking to build and grow in the area, and residents who want to participate in the local economy through employment or by spending money locally. East Hants Municipal Council has recognized the importance of this issue and has put in place a strategic objective to develop a vision and plan for redevelopment of the Elmsdale Village Core (*East Hants Strategic Plan, 2021*). To complete this objective East Hants engaged FBM Inc. to help collaborate with local business, developers, residents, and community groups to create a long-term design vision for approximately 750 m of the Route 214. The Elmsdale Village Core Concept Design and Report proposes a long-term vision for a portion of the Route 214 and provides recommendations that will assist local industry and create a vibrant, dynamic, and people-friendly commercial district for the community.

Financial Impact Statement

Any future financial impact arising from the Elmsdale Village Core Concept Plan would be brought for discussion to Council through East Hants' annual budgeting process.

Recommendation

That the Corporate and Residential Services Committee recommends to Council to adopt the Elmsdale Village Core Concept Design Report.

Recommended Motion

Move that the Corporate and Residential Services Committee recommends to Council to adopt the Elmsdale Village Core Concept Design Report as attached to the Executive Committee Agenda April 19, 2022.

Background

In many communities across Nova Scotia there is a lack of an identifiable main street or downtown core. This creates challenges for businesses looking to build and grow in the area, and residents who want to participate in the local economy through employment or by spending money locally. In 2019, East Hants participated *The Mainstreet for Nova Scotia Communities initiative*. This project focused on the walkability, accessibility, economic activity, and design of the central provincial roads in rural and smaller communities in Nova Scotia. The goal of the project and report was to highlight issues and develop ways to improve challenges in areas where highways are the main street in the community. East Hants Municipal Council has recognized the importance of this issue and has put in place an objective in the East Hants Strategic Plan to create a vision and plan for the redevelopment of the Elmsdale Village Core to support the current and future needs of the East Hants community.

To complete this objective East Hants staff from Planning and Development, Infrastructure and Operations, and Economic and Business Development engaged FBM Inc. to help collaborate with Municipal Councilors, local businesses, developers, residents and community groups to create a long-term streetscape design vision for approximately 750 m of the Route 214.

The Elmsdale Village Core Concept Design and Report proposes recommendations that will assist local industry and create a vibrant, dynamic, and people-friendly commercial district for the community.

Discussion

In developing the Concept Design, an analysis of previous reports, relevant data, and important considerations was completed, as well as stakeholder and community engagements. A number of key themes emerged:

- Many East Hants businesses are unable to secure commercial space with the visibility and foot traffic they need to grow their business.
- The current Route 214 area is not conducive to residents walking, biking and spending time, which is critical for local businesses success.
- There are issues with traffic and parking.
- The need for community amenities and gathering spaces is important to the community.
- There is interest in the redevelopment of the former Elmsdale School site and the opportunity for public spaces on this site.
- The approximately 750 m the Route 214 of is both an emerging Main Street area as well as a vehicle through-route for many commuters and trucks travelling to and from Highway 102 and neighboring communities.
- Nova Scotia Department of Public Works (NSDPW) owns and maintains the road right-of-way and their design input is critical.

The Concept Design identifies a number of elements as essential to help address these issues and they form the overall focus of the streetscaping recommendations contained within the report. These elements are:

- Walking and Active Transportation
- Accessibility
- Crossings
- Roadway design
- Access Management (Driveways & side-streets)
- Parking
- Potential Future Transit
- Beautification and elements unique to Elmsdale
- Trees and Landscaping
- Small Public Spaces
- Parks and Squares
- New Development and Infill
- Gateway elements

- Collaboration, Phasing, Implementation & Maintenance

As part of each of these elements The Concept Plan proposes a number of recommendations that Council could consider. Including, designing separated walking and cycling paths on both sides of Route 214, working with NS Department of Public Works to design accessible cross walks at Horne Road and Roulston Drive, and continuing to exploring the three roadway design options requested by Councillors and identified in the report. There are also recommendations for developing a village core parking strategy to guide the provision of parking, (including providing accessible parking on-street and/or off-street), and implementing placemaking elements like trees, lighting, banners, and small public spaces (or parklets) along the main street. It is important to note that that these recommendations and the resulting work would be brought for future discussion to Council as the appropriate time arises.

Collaboration is a priority of the concept design report and a key recommendation is to work with businesses and the development community to locate new development uses along Route 214. This will help to infill the streetscape and reinforce the Main Street vitality through a mix of land use types and amenities. This infill could include community uses, outdoor spaces, a mix of housing options for families and workers, the potential to explore affordable housing options, as well as a focus on retail and professional service businesses that contribute to the future vision for Route 214. Another recommendation is to continue to work with NS DPW to consider reduced building front setbacks on a case-by-case basis and to identify detailed design opportunities for the roadway, walking and cycling infrastructure to support the vision for Route 214 to become East Hants' Main Street.

Feedback on the draft concept design was attained through an initial workshop with Municipal Councilors held in December 2021, along with a virtual stakeholder meeting held in January 2022 with community leaders, businesses, and residents. Comments from community stakeholders were also received by phone and email.

The Concept Design proposes a number of recommendations to achieve Council's vision of a dynamic and vibrant commercial district which could be implemented over the next number of years. Phasing should be considered in the future detailed design, with construction implementation occurring over time in such a way that costs are managed and the end vision is always supported, as it gradually and consistently emerges. Phasing considerations may look at a specific sections or facilities for improvement and will need to rely on factors such as redevelopment or the need to replace infrastructure at a key time to implement the design.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

This project aligns to the East Hants Strategic Plan 2021 goal for Economic Prosperity to develop vibrant commercial districts and specifically fulfills Objective 4 to create a vision and plan for redevelopment of the Elmsdale Village Core.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Not applicable.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Any future financial impact arising from the Elmsdale Village Core Concept Plan would be brought for discussion to Council through East Hants' annual budgeting process.

Alternatives

1. That Corporate and Residential Services recommends to Council to provide further direction to Staff.

Attachments

Elmsdale Village Core Concept Design and Report